

Portugal exited a three-year bailout program in May 2014 without a precautionary line of credit, making it financially independent; its economy is approximately 4 percent smaller than it was at the start of the bailout. A number of strikes and protests took place throughout the year in reaction to pay and pension cuts, though to a lesser extent than in the past. In May, the Portuguese Constitutional Court struck down public-sector pay cuts proposed by the government for the 2015 budget; the parliament passed legislation in September attempting to implement cuts again.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 39 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

The 230 members of the unicameral legislature, the Assembly of the Republic, are elected every four years using a system of proportional representation. The president can serve up to two consecutive five-year terms. While the position is largely ceremonial, the president can delay legislation through a veto, dissolve the assembly to trigger early elections, and declare war as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The legislature nominates the prime minister, who is then confirmed by the president. The constitution was amended in 1997 to allow Portuguese citizens living abroad to vote in presidential and legislative elections, as well as national referendums.

Early legislative elections were held in 2011 after the Socialist Party (PS) government's fourth austerity budget proposal was rejected by all five opposition parties. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) rose to power with 108 seats and 40 percent of the vote, compared to the PS's 74 seats (29 percent). PSD leader Pedro Passos Coelho formed a coalition government with the Democratic Social Center–Popular Party (CDS-PP), which won 24 seats. The Unitarian Democratic Coalition, composed of the Portuguese Communist Party and the Greens, took 16 seats, and the progressive Left Bloc won 8.

Aníbal Cavaco Silva, a center-right candidate who had served as prime minister from 1985 to 1995, won the 2006 presidential election and was reelected in 2011.

In October 2014, Coelho rejected a call for early elections by PS leader Ferro Rodrigues.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 16 / 16

Political parties operate freely. The main political parties are the center-left PS, the center-right PSD, and the Christian-democratic CDS-PP. The 2011 elections saw a change of power from the PS to the PSD. Many smaller parties represent a range of social, political, and economic ideologies. The autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira—two island groups in the Atlantic—have their own political structures with legislative and executive powers.

C. Functioning of Government: 11 / 12

A 2009 police operation exposed companies engaged in illicitly obtaining industrial waste contracts. More than 30 people were charged with graft, money laundering, and influence peddling, including a number of officials linked to the PS. In September 2014, numerous high-profile individuals were convicted in connection with the scandal: Armando Vara, the former vice president of Millennium BCP Bank, was sentenced to five years in prison; Jose Penedos, former president of the country's power grid, also received a five-year sentence; and prominent businessman Manuel Godinho was sentenced to 17 years and six months.

In November, at least 60 police raids were carried out across the country as part of an investigation into corruption in immigration procedures. The raids led to the arrest of 11 officials, including the heads of the Portuguese border agency and notary institute. The investigation revealed corrupt practices in the issuing of so-called golden visas to wealthy foreign nationals in return for real-estate purchases and other investments. Also in November, former prime minister José Sócrates was arrested for suspected tax fraud and money laundering. The arrest marked the first detention of a former democratic premier and comes as the result of the country's attempt to curb its history of corruption.

In February 2014, the European Commission released the first European Anti-Corruption Report, which noted that Portugal did not have a national anticorruption strategy, that the country needs to address shortcomings in prosecuting high-level corruption cases, the lack of preventive measures for corruption in party funding and public procurement, and conflicts of interest among local-level politicians. The report also found that 90 percent of Portuguese believe that corruption is widespread in their country.

Portugal was ranked 31 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Civil Liberties: 58 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 16 / 16

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed. Portugal remains one of the few countries in Europe where defamation is still a criminal offense, and although prosecutions are uncommon, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has condemned Portugal on multiple occasions for criminal defamation convictions. In April 2014, the ECHR awarded more than €16,000 (\$18,000) to two journalists from *Jornal do Centro* who had been found guilty of defamation in a 2002 ruling by a Portuguese court. Poorly funded public broadcasting channels face serious competition from commercial television outlets. Internet access is not restricted.

Watchdogs have expressed concern over Angola's influence over Portuguese media, which has increased in recent years as the financial crisis has led media owners to seek investments from the wealthy former Portuguese colony. Powerful Angolans hold shares in the Newshold media group, which controls *So/*—Portugal's third largest weekly—and other major publications. There have also been repercussions for journalists who critique Angola, encouraging self-censorship.

Although Portugal is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion and forbids religious discrimination. The Religious Freedom Act provides benefits for religions that have been established in the country for at least 30 years (or recognized internationally for at least 60 years), including tax exemptions, legal recognition of marriages, and respect for traditional holidays. Academic freedom is respected.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 12 / 12

Freedoms of assembly and association are honored, and national and international nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate in the country without interference. In March 2014, more than 10,000 protesters gathered outside the parliament building in Lisbon in reaction to the effects of austerity; among the demonstrators were a large number of police officers affected by pay and pension reductions. Teachers' unions organized protests against cuts to education in October.

Workers enjoy the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike. However, a 2003 labor law mandated that workers assess a proposed strike's impact on citizens, and provide minimal services during such an event. Only 19 percent of the workforce is unionized. Unions have organized a large number of strikes since the beginning of the economic crisis in the early 2000s, with an increased number since the introduction of austerity measures. Strikes continued throughout 2014, though in fewer numbers than the country has witnessed in recent years. In October, the Frente Comum, a union coalition representing hundreds of thousands of public sector workers, organized a strike in protest of austerity measures.

The 2012 Labor Code included changes to the right of collective bargaining. In 2013, the Constitutional Court ruled that three of the new provisions were unconstitutional.

F. Rule of Law: 15 / 16

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, though staff shortages and inefficiency have contributed to a considerable backlog of pending trials. Human rights groups have expressed concern over unlawful police shootings and deaths in custody.

A 2012 investigation of Portugal's prisons and detention centers by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) found many cases of alleged ill-treatment of prisoners, including physical assaults, failure to give prisoners access to lawyers, poor conditions in detention cells, overcrowding, lack of programmed activities to reduce extended confinement, long periods of solitary confinement, accommodation of juveniles with adults, and inadequate numbers of staff. A CPT follow-up visit in 2013 found little improvement. Overcrowding in prisons remains a major problem, as do mortality rates, which are higher than the European average, according to the Council of Europe.

Equal treatment under the law is guaranteed by the constitution and various laws, which prohibit discrimination based on factors including gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation. The human rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people have in recent years received strong legal protections. The government continues to combat racism, including by launching initiatives to promote the integration of immigrants and Roma. A 2007 immigration law facilitates family reunification and legalization for immigrants in specific circumstances. A 2012 law extends temporary visas and imposes higher penalties for employers who hire staff that are in the country illegally, bringing the country closer to EU migration policy.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 15 / 16

The freedoms of movement and residence are protected by the country's constitution and laws, and the

government respects these rights in practice. The government does not interfere with citizens' rights to own property, establish private businesses, and engage in commercial activity.

Domestic violence against women and children remains a problem, and few domestic violence cases are prosecuted. Portugal legalized same-sex marriage in 2010.

Portugal is a destination and transit point for trafficked persons, particularly women from Eastern Europe and former Portuguese colonies in South America and Africa. In 2014, the government began implementation of two three-year plans to combat human trafficking and sexual violence. Although forced labor is prohibited by law, it sometimes occurs in practice, especially in the construction industry. Immigrant workers are especially vulnerable to economic exploitation. According to a 2008 study by the Observatory for Immigration, immigrants pay excessively high taxes even while little revenue is channeled to projects that benefit them directly.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)